

Application No. 09/873,756
Amendment "A" dated November 2, 2005
Reply to Office Action mailed May 2, 2005

REMARKS

The non-final Office Action, mailed May 2, 2005, considered claims 1-34 of the present application. In the Office Action, the Examiner has indicated that claims 19-34 are allowed, while claims 8 and 15 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 1-4 and 11-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Barton (U.S. Patent No. 6,163,842). Claims 5-7, 9, 10 and 16-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Barton (U.S. Patent No. 6,163,842) in view of the Examiner taking official notice.¹

By this paper, the specification has been amended in paragraph [02] of the originally filed application, so as to correct a minor grammatical error. By this paper, claims 1, 4, 5, 10 and 12 have been amended,² while no claims have been added or cancelled, such that claims 1-34 remain pending. Of these, claims 1, 12, 19, 25 and 31 are the only independent claims.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102(e)

Claims 1-4 and 11-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Barton (U.S. Patent No. 6,163,842). Applicants respectfully disagree and submit that the Barton reference does not anticipate the present invention as recited in claims 1-4 and 11-14, particularly as amended, in that it does not teach or suggest each and every recited limitation.

Initially, it will be noted that the present invention is directed to a method (claim 1) and a computer program product (claim 11) for digitally signing an electronic document such that the digital signature is embedded in the electronic document. As recited in claim 1, for example, the method includes creating an electronic document by providing content for the electronic document. Then, a signature block for each person signing the document is inserted and

¹ Although the prior art status and some of the assertions made with regard to the cited art is not being challenged at this time, Applicants reserve the right to challenge the prior art status and assertions made with regard to the cited art, as well as any official notice, which was taken in the last Office Action, at any appropriate time in the future, should the need arise, such as, for example in a subsequent amendment or during prosecution of a related application.

² Support for the claim amendments is clearly found within paragraphs [010], [028], [041], [068] and Figures 3A-3E, among other passages and figures of the originally filed application. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the amendments to the claims do not add new matter, and entry thereof is respectfully submitted.

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embedded in the electronic document, where each signature block has one or more attributes, including at least a signature attribute. Thereafter, when a person digitally signs the electronic document, one or more of the attributes are filled before the digital signature for the electronic document is generated. When the digital signature is generated, the filled one or more attributes are included and the digital signature placed in the signature attribute of the signature block of the person digitally signing the electronic document. Further, and as clarified by the above amendment, the signature attribute corresponds to the digital signature of the person digitally signing the document.

Although Barton generally deals with methods for embedding attributes and digital signatures in data blocks, Applicants note that the cited reference fails to teach a method which